

## **AMHERST COUNCIL ON AGING MINUTES**

### **June 7, 2007**

**Members Present:** Daniel Clapp, Elsie Fetterman, Doris Holden, Ed Kaler, Rosemary Kofler, Tom McAuley Barbara Sutherland, Susan Whitbourne, David Yaukey

**Select Board Liaison:** absent

**Staff Present:** Nancy Pagano (Director/Program Director), Maura Plante (Assistant Director/Services), Karen Erman (Administrative Assistant), Marlene Barnett (Program Coordinator)

**Guests:** Deb Jankowski, Janet Gorth, Stephanie O'Keeffe, Sheri Weintraub, Marge Babb, Jean Haggerty

#### **Welcome:**

Barbara Sutherland, Chair, called the Council on Aging meeting to order at 9:09 AM.

**Ed Kaler** announced his resignation from the COA effective June 30, 2007. Nancy thanked him for his energy, inspiration and strong voice for the COA, especially with PVTa problems.

#### **Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

The minutes of the May 10, 2007 meeting were approved and accepted.

### **CONTINUING BUSINESS**

#### **Counseling Center:**

**Maura** introduced **Sheri Weintraub** MSW, LICSW, the counselor/therapist who will be working at the Counseling Center. Sheri works part time for VNA Hospice as a therapist. **Sheri** explained that she has worked with elders for 15-20 years. She looks forward to her work with elders and caregivers at the Counseling Center. She will be available on Wednesdays and Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday afternoons. **Susan** asked if Sheri would be supervising UMass students, but **Maura** said that the students funding cycle doesn't mesh with the needs of the counseling center. They will continue to talk about that possibility.

#### **Nominating Committee Report and Voting for Officers for FY08:**

**Dan** reported. With Ed's resignation and Susan's term expiring that left two openings. The committee chose Janet Gorth and Stephanie O'Keeffe from the four applications received. The Town Manager approved. Dan introduced Janet and Stephanie, who will begin their terms in July.

#### **Budget Update:**

**Nancy** reported that the COA budget did not get voted on as yet at Town Meeting. Nancy will submit a grant to HVES for funding to support Marlene's hours, which will most assuredly be cut again in FY08.

#### **Nursing Center Update:**

**Rosemary** reported that progress continues for reopening the nursing center. The ad for an RN will be submitted to the Hampshire Gazette and the Amherst Bulletin next week. An interview committee has been formed. Nancy will supervise the administrative and general functioning of the center. Dan Clapp will be medical advisor/consultant. Ellie Vanetzian will be nursing supervisor. Julie Federman, Public Health Nurse, will also fill a consulting role as needed. The Bubble Room is in a state of preparation – files have been moved and new furniture is in place.

**The COA meeting was adjourned temporarily at 9:20 AM in order to hold the Senior Trust Meeting.**

### **SENIOR TRUST MEETING**

**Senior Trust Treasurer's Report:** **Doris** reported that the only activity since April was added interest. There were no disbursements. The checking account balance is \$1,147.15. The Fund Account Balance is \$87,485.69.

### **Friends decision about money transfer method:**

**Deb Jankowski, Attorney,** reviewed the situation of the Trust money. The money is not really Town money but the COA is a Town agency and the members of the Senior Trust are members of the COA. Therefore we have created the Friends Group, which can independently raise and hold funds for the COA. When the Trust is dissolved the Trust money needs to be turned over to the Town, which may be risky in this climate of financial crisis in Town. The money could theoretically be spent by the Town although the Town Manager doesn't think that would happen. Deb and Nancy met with Finance Director, John Musante. He suggested we vote to dissolve the Trust **contingent on Town Meeting voting in favor of giving back the funds to the Friends Group.** If Town Meeting does not vote in favor of the transfer, the Friends will seek legislative authority to establish a Town account dedicated to the Friends of the Amherst Senior Center. The Trustees will then transfer the Trust funds to that account. The soonest that vote would happen would be at Town Meeting in October. However, once the Friends Group is incorporated, fundraising can begin. A motion was made, seconded and unanimously approved to follow the stated proposed suggestion as made by John Musante. Thanks were expressed to Deb Jankowski for all her help.

Officers voted by the Friends are: Susan Whitbourne (President), Janice Denton (Vice President), Doris Holden (Treasurer), Shirley Lauder (Assistant Treasurer), Norma Packard (Clerk). and Barbara Slovin, Allen Torrey and Barbara Sutherland (Directors).

**Nancy** explained the use of the Trust funds. Historically the money has been used for quite a variety of needs for the Senior Center – for staff training and conferences (some of which are required), toward the purchase of the Van, for Wellness Grants for indigent people to cover their care in the foot and ear clinics, etc. The interest earned on our money is small so we rely on the principle for these expenses. With the budget cuts, it is anticipated that the Friends Group will be called on to provide money for even greater needs in the next year. (The purpose of the Friends Group is to support the programs and services of the Senior Center.) The question arises as to whether the Friends should allocate the \$14,000 necessary to restore Marlene's hours, which are proposed to be cut. Nancy anticipates even further personnel cuts next year. Nancy is concerned about setting a precedent if we should use money for Marlene's hours this year. If the Friends continues to use money to support salaries and benefits of staff, the money will not last long. She invited discussion.

**Tom** feels strongly that the money should not be used for salaries.

**Dan** feels differently. If the Town does not support our services to seniors and we have the money available, to use that money for those services sends a message to Town Meeting and the Select Board that we feel seriously about the need and the importance of the services. If we hold onto our money the Select Board and others may take the viewpoint that maybe our needs are not as great as we say they are.

**Elsie** expressed concern for the impact that Marlene's reduced hours would have on the rest of the staff. She agrees with Dan that the money needs to come from reserves if needed.

**Rosemary** feels if the money is there and the need is desperate, it should be used. It does not have to be viewed as setting a precedent. It can be a one-time use only, for a critical need.

**Tom** stated that the money in the Trust came mainly from the "surrey" donations. He thinks the money should be used strictly for incidental items rather than anything fixed. Maybe we need to look at cutting the services we give.

**Susan** wants to support Marlene and figure out how to do that, but she feels that using the funds for personnel costs is not a good idea. She understands Dan's position but is concerned about how long the money will last.

**Doris** mentioned that the Friends of the Library has numerous fund raising events. We should consider such things.

**Stephanie** explained that the majority of Town Meeting members view using reserve funds for on-going operating costs as financially irresponsible.

**Maura and Nancy** explained that the Senior Center gets a set amount from Town for ALL personnel positions. The Formula Grant money is deducted from that lump sum, so if Marlene's hours are covered by outside money the Town just deducts that from what they give us. The Town wants to keep Marlene's position at 20 hours per week.

**Barbara** talked about the importance of services such as Brown Bag in helping her to make ends meet, even though she is still able to work. That need is even greater for those seniors who cannot work.

**Nancy** expressed her frustration over the lack of money to cover our essential services. She reviewed the programs and services we offer and can't begin to justify how we could cut anything.

**The Senior Trust Meeting was adjourned at 10:14 AM.**

**The Council on Aging meeting reconvened at 10:14 AM.**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **Retreat in October:**

**Nancy** asked if members would like to have a retreat in October and what kind of program they would like. Elsie would like a meeting with lots of dialogue, sharing ideas for hopes and dreams, with a focus on setting our priorities. She suggested having the Friends Group join us. Susan would like to focus on action ideas, concrete plans and fund raising goals. Nancy suggested a keynote speaker on the plight of elders. Elsie suggested Al Norman, Executive Director of Mass Home Care. He lobbied successfully in Boston for family caregivers to get paid for home care. Dan said another focus could be to look into ways in which we can educate the community. Maura would like everyone to identify and prioritize his or her goals in preparation for the retreat. David suggested having someone at the retreat who has an alternative viewpoint, someone who is skeptical about the dire needs of seniors. Al Norman could then respond to that viewpoint. October 25 was suggested as a tentative date for the retreat. The regular COA meeting will be held on October 11. Nancy pointed out that this is the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the COA.

### **SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE**

#### **250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee:**

**David** reported that the purpose of the committee is to prepare and recommend to the Select Board a program of celebration for the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of Amherst in 2009. The committee, established in 2004, wants to reach out to the entire community, and include events highlighting the history of Amherst, arts and literature, and a parade. Progress is slow.

#### **Comprehensive Planning Committee:**

**Rosemary** reported the CPC is beginning to receive responses to the 1600 surveys mailed out 3 weeks ago. A reminder mailing will go out next week to those who have not yet responded. The seven work groups have completed work on the Strategies, the means of achieving the Goals and Objectives set out in April. Rosemary is on the Transportation and Circulation Work Group. They submitted a total of 32 strategies. One of those 32 is: *To establish community-oriented transit using appropriately sized buses and vans to complement existing Five Colleges-oriented transit.* The strategies from all work groups will be presented to the community in July.

#### **Highland Valley Elder Services:**

**Elsie** talked about the Pilot Program in which letters were sent to 30 caregivers in the area to assess their needs and determine how HVES can benefit them. There is \$30,000 available to help those caregivers and a Family Caregiver Support Group.

The COA meeting was adjourned at 10:41 AM.

**The next meeting will be held on July 12, 2007 at 9:00 AM.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Rosemary Kofler, Secretary